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Boyd, William Robert

What is the matter in America?

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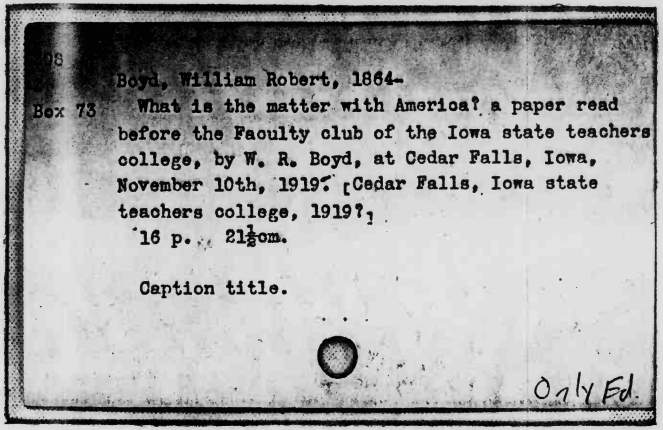
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# What Is the Matter In America?

*A Paper, Read Before the Faculty Club of The Iowa State Teachers College, by W. R. Boyd, at Cedar Falls, Iowa, November 10th, 1919.*

Published by the Iowa State Teachers College

No thoughtful man or woman can contemplate the existing state of affairs throughout the world—and if an American, in our own country in particular—without grave concern.

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the situation if possible, and to discover, if so be it we can discover, the forces that have been and are at work and which have brought about the present abnormal conditions and the well-night universal discontent which is everywhere manifest and which, if not allayed, may lead us to experiments and excesses which might easily destroy all that is best in organized society.

It is at once a difficult and an almost hopeless task. It is apt, also to be an unpleasant one; for whoever looks the facts as they now exist in the face and discusses them frankly is apt to be unhappy himself and make others anything but comfortable.

Matthew Arnold, writing of Goethe, said:

"He took the suffering human race;
He read each wound, each weakness clear.
He put his finger on the place,
And said: 'Thou ailest here and here.'
And he was happy—if to know
Causes of things, and far below
His feet to see the lurid flow
Of terror and insane distress
And headlong fate—be happiness."

Thoroughly conscious that I possess no unusual powers of analysis or divination, I see, or think I see, enough of destructive tendency in the world today to make me anything but cheerful as to the immediate future. In the long reach of things, God reigns, and the "far off divine event" must come—but through what travail, what heartache!

The most discouraging thing about human progress is the seeming inability of mankind to go steadily forward, by slow degrees, by more and more, holding fast each new vantage ground

and using it to gain another. Why can we not be prosperous and yet keep our virtue? Why can we not be strong without the pride that goeth before a fall? I do not know. Do you?

But this is perhaps beside the question. The condition in which America finds herself is due, primarily, to three sets of forces: First, those beyond our control; second, those in which we have knowingly acquiesced without always thinking of the cost entailed; third, those which have influenced us for evil without our being conscious that we were being misled.

The supreme force beyond our control—a force which few foresaw and none could forestall—was the war. For four years and four months the world was engaged in a titanic struggle. During that period millions of men were withdrawn from productive labor and were engaged wholly in processes of destruction. Millions were killed—the strongest and the best—and other millions were disabled more or less permanently. It will take a generation or more to bring the man power of the world back to where it was in 1914. Billions of dollars worth of productive property was destroyed. Every kind of surplus was exhausted, and the power to create surpluses was weakened to the vanishing point. The resources of the future have been mortgaged by national debts so huge that the mere interest thereon will require more money than was needed prior to August, 1914, to pay the governmental expenses of all the nations engaged in the war. Each of these countries must not only repair the waste and loss incident to the war and pay at least the interest on its national debt, but it must care for those who are maimed and it must support, in part at least, the dependents of those who "gave the last full measure of devotion."

The practices in which we have all acquiesced are of a different nature; but they are, nevertheless, mighty factors in the situation of which we complain, namely the discrepancy between income and outgo. For years prior to the war, it was the laudable ambition of every right-thinking man and woman everywhere, and especially in America, to raise the general standard of living—to shorten the hours of labor, to provide better working conditions for men and women and to protect little children; in short, to do everything within reason to make life more worth while from the standpoint of physical comfort and well-being. That there has been great progress along these lines is a matter of common knowledge. That it could not come about without increasing the cost of things people eat and wear and use generally, was avoided in our discussions rather than dwelt upon as it should have been.

It is one of the handicaps of a free government that public



26 March, 1920 - c R.W.

men fear to tell people the whole truth, if that truth be disagreeable. Perhaps the people do not reward truthfulness, but rather turn to the demagogue who tells them, not what they should know, but what they would like to believe. It is a fact, however, that the general curtailment of the hours of labor, from ten to eight, has added to the cost of many of the articles of daily use. The cost of everything devised for the general welfare of the toiler had to be passed on to the public. It could not, in general, be otherwise. We would not suggest a single backward step in any of these lines of progress; but let us not deceive ourselves into thinking that we can eat our cake and keep it too. Increased taxes, better sanitary conditions in homes, and the like, add to rental charges. Shorter hours, the abolition of the sweat-shop and of child labor mean increased costs. They are worth the price. We should go forward with our humane program, but we should recognize that we must pay for it and that few, if any, will escape.

These things are significant and should not be lost sight of; but they are as nothing when compared with what everyone must pay, always, and especially now, when the world is destitute of surplus and when its man-power is depleted, namely the price of our chief besetting national economic sin—our wastefulness and our extravagance.

Until we entered the war, it but brought "grist to our mill," so far as dollars and cents are concerned. It stimulated manufacturing; it added to the profits of agriculture. All who were employed in the industries stimulated by the war shared in the prosperity thus artificially created. In some industries, owners, who in 1914 scarcely knew how long they could keep out of the hands of the executioner, found themselves rich over night. Men who had counted three dollars a day a high wage were suddenly granted ten, twenty, and in some cases even more, without asking for an increase. For the most part, these increased wages went for luxuries rather than into homes or savings-bank accounts. The newly rich indulged in a perfect orgy of extravagance—vulgar in the extreme and envy-provoking to a degree.

In a short time practically everybody had caught the spendthrift fever. A man without an automobile was about as much of a curiosity as a woman going to church wearing a sunbonnet. Cotton hose became a drug on the market, and for a woman to wear a hat that cost less than fifteen dollars was to lose her self-respect.

Then came the crisis of 1917. America entered the war. As a nation we had failed to sense the grave issues involved in that conflict. We had pitied the afflicted in a superficial sort of fashion, but that it was our war as well as theirs only a few realized,

and to their warnings and exhortations we turned a deaf ear and cried: "On with the dance." But when it came—to our everlasting credit be it said—we rose to the occasion and faced our duty everywhere. Our young men accepted the draft without complaint, and "gave to chance the care and keeping of their lives" without a murmur. Every call for money was freely met; taxes were voted almost joyously; we accepted every restriction imposed upon our liberty, and met every request of every character in the spirit of true patriotism.

The end came before we had entered much beyond the portals of the temple of sacrifice, as compared with the nations who had held the Hun at bay for three years. It came suddenly and unexpectedly. We had done so little, as measured by what we expected to be called upon to do, that we doubtless failed to realize the enormity of the burden placed upon the future by what had been done. If we did realize it, our acts belied our convictions. The conditions as they existed throughout the world called for a continuance of all the economies imposed by the conflict while it was in progress. But in America, and we understand in England as well, the signing of the armistice was the signal for a relaxation of all effort in this direction, a brushing aside of all restraint, and a renewal, on an extended scale, of our orgy of extravagance. There is no need to dwell upon it; it has been flaunted in every face; it it known of all men.

I think we could summon the moral fibre which would speedily get us out of our present difficulties were it not for the third force to which I have referred. The task is not an impossible nor yet a difficult one for a country of the marvelous resources of the United States. We have no burden that will weigh too heavily upon us. We need only to be saved from our own greed and our own extravagance. Why do we not proceed to save ourselves instead of doing the very things which in the present situation should not be thought of? I think it is due, in large part, to the fact that for fifteen years the minds of the rank and file of our people have been poisoned. I think they have been poisoned chiefly from five sources: A large part of our magazines, some respectable, some semi-respectable, and others yellow from cover to cover; a comparatively small section of the daily press—small numerically but having a wide circulation; the chautauqua circuits; a small percentage of the protestant pulpit; and a not inconsiderable element in our higher institutions of learning. The vogue of the magazine and newspaper muck-raker began about eighteen years ago. That there were abuses which needed to have the white light of publicity turned upon them goes without saying, and it was from these honest exposures that muck-raking inadvertently sprang. The applause which greeted the honest exposure of things confessedly wrong caused mercenary space-writers to attack everybody and everything, regardless of the merits of the case, and gave them ready sale for their copy. To those who followed men like Lincoln Steffens, Tom Lawson, Charles Edward Russell, Ray Stannard Baker and David Graham Philips, it seemed that even Sodom and Gomorrah must have been virtuous communities as compared with the United States, that those who sailed the seas under the black flag in days gone by were gentlemen as compared with the American man of business, and that public men everywhere in the United States were but the puppets of corporate power. A baser series of articles than those which appeared some years ago under the caption "The Treason of the Senate" never disgraced any periodical. Those of us who are in middle life and who have lived long in Iowa need not be reminded of the nobility and usefulness of William B. Allison. He represented Iowa in the Senate nearly thirty-six years—as pure of heart and conduct as any man who ever served a state; and yet the muck-raker who wrote that series of articles held him up to scorn as one who "in all his thirty-three industrious years—years that had seen his private pocket fill with stealthy millions, had never done a single act of service for the people." When Senator Allison died it was found that he had scarcely kept intact the sum bequeathed to him by his wife—about eighty thousand dollars. The magazine muck-raker was ably seconded by blatherskites of the chautauqua platforms—some with reputations gained in public station and some employed simply because they had tongues that could slander in well-rounded periods. I indulge in no wholesale denunciation of the chautauqua enterprise. It was conceived with good intent, and served, in the main, a useful purpose; but for a time it did lend itself to these forces of evil and unquestionably did a lot of harm. Neither do I wish to indict the pulpit or any considerable element in our colleges and universities.

One of the most disquieting elements in our present-day situation is the condition of our churches. Let us be honest. Is the church the vital force it should be in the world? Is it the vital force it used to be? I do not think any candid person will answer these questions in the affirmative. The rewards of life, which have the strongest appeal, are so much greater elsewhere that the pulpit no longer attracts men of strength and power in the proportion it once did. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that we now and then find occupants of pulpits who would rather dabble in and babble about parlor socialism than preach the gospel.

As for men of the Scott Nearing type in colleges and univer-

sities, fortunately there are not many; but there are a considerable number who, having never dealt with the world in any concrete sense, look upon men and women as a builder looks upon the inanimate units with which he builds—as all pretty much alike—and who think that they would, if given a chance, fit into a society where all would be for each and each for all.

I am convinced that, from what has been instilled into us through these agencies, we have, as a people, come to have a false notion of wealth per se; a false notion as to the acquisition of wealth; and, through all and over all, an impression that every ill and every inequality can be banished from the world if only enough laws are enacted. As to our false notion about wealth per se, I cannot do better than to quote from an eminent citizen of our state, Mr. George E. Roberts, long editor of the Fort Dodge Messenger and now vice president of the National City Bank of New York. Mr. Roberts had been discussing the career of Andrew Carnegie and had pointed out how he had been a world leader in the development of the steel industry, multiplying its uses and greatly cheapening its cost, and how through all of the years of his active business career, he had put the profits of the industry back into the business, and how, through this development, he built up one of the largest fortunes in the world—a fortune considered by many to be an unjust reward and a menace to the interests of men generally. Summing up, Mr. Roberts said:

**"The chief cause of social discontent is the primitive, but still prevalent, idea that a rich man's income is kept in a vault, or somehow withdrawn from the common use and devoted to the owner's exclusive benefit. The truth is that everything that can be called an investment or that is yielding returns, is necessarily in public use. A man's clothes are an exclusive kind of property, and so is the house he lives in and its furnishings, but the productive wealth of the country is employed for the common welfare. Everything that is producing for the market is producing to meet public needs. The farming land of the country is private property, but, regardless of who owns it, it is producing for a common supply. The wheat crop now being harvested is 300,000,000 bushels short of the estimate of June 1, but that loss under normal conditions would fall on the consumers rather than the land-owners. The cotton crop is also short, but there again the loss falls mainly on the consumers. The public's greatest interest is in increasing production, and it is to this purpose that all invested wealth is devoted. The great bulk of the earnings and profits of wealth are being used as Carnegie used his during his active career, viz.: in developing the means of production and increasing the supply of articles of common consumption.**

**"Unfortunately, our public discussion ignores this evident truth, and proceeds for the most part upon the theory that the achievements of the leaders of industry benefit nobody but themselves, and**



**that it is good public policy to hamper their efforts and deprive them of the means with which they work."**

Mr. Roberts also takes up and disposes of the notion that some government agency could have done as well or better in the development of the steel industry and no man enriched thereby above his fellows. Touching this point, he says:

**"Andrew Carnegie's career is very suggestive of comment upon the proposal to have the government embark in industry. If Mr. Carnegie had been hired by the Government, after the Lenine plan, to devote his life to the development of the steel industry upon a salary amounting in the aggregate to his living expenses, the charge upon the community for his services would have been practically the same. He could not have devoted himself to the task more completely, and, allowing that his zest was undiminished, he would have had nothing like the independence of action and free use of resources. Imagine him before Congressional Committees (changing every two years) trying to persuade them to adopt his policies and dissaude them from distributing the steel industry throughout the states on the basis of population and according to the principles laid down for the public building and river and harbor appropriations!**

**"Or, imagine him trying to get permission to scrap practically new equipment in order to carry out some new idea; and imagine his position, and the task he would have defending himself against critics and rivals, if some of his ventures proved unsuccessful!**

**"The whole theory of having the government conduct industry is based upon the idea that the profits of private industry are lost to the public, that private wealth is hoarded for exclusive use and consumption. People think of a rich man's wealth as withdrawn from the common supply, and that other people have less in consequence, but that is true only of the negligible portion which he and his dependents actually consume. Additions to capital all go to increasing the common supply, so that everybody has more in consequence."**

I do not believe that many dishonest fortunes have been made in productive industry. The mere speculator is a leech and a parasite. He employs no one to speak of. He does not add to the world's resources or opportunities. But the speculator loses more often than he wins. The industrial genuis of the creative type is a genuine benefactor, be he never so selfish personally. The genius of an Armour or a Carnegie or a Rockefeller makes it possible for many of his fellow men to live better than they otherwise would, and usually men of this type cheapen and make easier the distribution of some common necessity. Not long ago there passed away a man who had accumulated a fortune of sixty-five millions. Forty years ago he was a poor boy clerking in a store. He conceived the idea that the community in which he lived would respond to the bringing together under one roof, manifold articles of every-day use that could be sold for not more than ten cents. Today his five-and-

ten-cent stores are everywhere and the people patronize them gladly. Did Mr. Woolworth ruin anybody? Was he in any sense a menace to his country and the world?

This propaganda of which I speak has brought about a sort of progressive jealousy. It is not along the down-and-outer who is envious. The man with an income of two thousand dollars is jealous of the man who has three thousand, and he, in turn, of him who has four thousand, each thinking that the man who has more than he is dishonest or unduly favored, and that society is somehow all wrong.

If there is such a thing as a master fallacy in America today, it is the notion that every inequality—and inequality is everywhere in nature—can be done away with through the instrumentality of some legal enactment. We cherish the hallucination that every elemental passion can be banished from the hearts and heads of men and women by some resolution of a town council, some enactment of a legislature or a congress, or by a league of nations to enforce peace.

My friends, we are on the wrong track. We seem to have forgotten every lesson of history and every admonition of the great teachers. There are not wanting those who would class Jesus as a socialist. Who spake the parable of the three men, one of whom had five talents, another two and another one? Who denounced him who hid his talent in the earth and refused to use it so that it would gain an additional talent, as a wicked and unprofitable servant?

We are fast coming to the point where he would fain look to the state for everything, and the more we depend upon the state the more hopelessly entangled we become. This fallacy was given a tremendous impetus here and in Great Britain during the war. It is difficult to understand how this mistake came to be made, unless we lay it at the door of what is designated as politics. England, for a time, relied upon the volunteer system to recruit her army, but was finally forced to conscription. The United States enacted conscription at the beginning, and wisely. It said to all the young men physically fit and within the prescribed age limits: "Yours not to reason why. Come—to camp, to trench, to flying field or to battleship, as the need is;" but to all others, except in the cases of the railroads, the telegraph and the telephone systems, its attitude was that of a supplicant. To labor, it came, hat in hand, and said, "Your terms, gentlemen." Of capital it scarce took time to ask the price. Construction everywhere was on the cost-plus basis, so that the more a contractor paid for materials and labor, and the more he wasted, the more he made. The cost of fuel



was raised so as to bring the least productive mines into action at a huge profit, thus raising the price of fuel three-fold and enriching the more favored mine owner enormously. And so it was all along the line. Why did not the government conscript every man and woman and every agency needed in the prosecution of the war as it conscripted its youth, and that without raising wages and increasing costs out of reason? In doing what it did do, it really helped no one, for the increased wages, for the most part, went for extravagances or in payment of the increased cost of subsistence, until now we have reached a point where he who has his wages raised pays, instantly and to the last cent, whatever increase is granted.

Through it all, two classes suffered most and will continue to suffer most until a readjustment is effected: Those who work for salaries as distinguished from wages and those who have retired from active business and are living on the income of a moderate amount of money.

Just now, both here and in England, a considerable element of the population, blind to the workings of economic laws and the dictates of common sense, are doing all in their power to make a bad matter worse. We are again afflicted with that periodic economic disease which produces the illusion that money is wealth and that higher wages will compensate for decreased production of those things men and women eat, wear and otherwise consume. They seem to think they can reduce work to the vanishing point. Six hour days and five day weeks are demanded at a time when the necessity for a full day's work and a full week's work was never more apparent. The cost of a small home has become well nigh prohibitive. Carpenters, bricklayers, plumbers, plasterers, and painters, no less than manufacturers of building materials, would make it altogether so. The profiteer is with us everywhere. He is perhaps more ruthless in small business than in big business. Big business for the most part has learned its lesson; and then it is more difficult to get a line on the corner grocery than it is on the packers. But the profiteer, big and little, would not last long if the people would, for a short period, simply refuse to pay present prices. There must come an end to all this, but how? It could come about peaceably and in order. I sought not long ago to point out how that could be done. This is what I said:

**The remedy for the present situation is in our own hands very largely. Recall the war-time spirit. Buy nothing that you can do without, either of food or clothing. Organize to increase production as you did when war demanded it. The necessity did not cease when the last gun was fired. Normal production will not be re-established for years. If everyone, rich and poor, would do just**

this on his own account for the space of one year, every profiteer would be forced to capitulate. Strikes only aggravate the condition they assume to remedy; as for legislation, we have small faith in it.

What America needs today is an exalted leadership, a leadership which, unmindful of immediate political advantage, will call the people back to a stern realization of the realities of the situation and the dangers which threaten. We can do one of two things: we can keep our heads, curb our greed and extravagance, enthrone the spirit of sacrifice and save our institutions, our property and our opportunities; or we can loose the forces of destruction and go to the devil cross lots.

The capitalist, big and little, needs to be told that in this situation he who curbs not his greed endangers everything he possesses. Labor must be brought to understand that the point has been reached where workmen pay their own increases and that, though they gain all their demands, yet is their last condition worse than their first.

It is up to us—the men and women of the United States. We must save ourselves. The process is not difficult. It requires no revolution, no departure from time-tried principles—only sanity, self-restraint, industry and economy. The waste of war and prodigality must be made good by a mighty effort at production and a wise universal effort at conservation.

A wise friend punctured my bubble in a letter which he wrote, as follows:

"Your article, 'We Must Save Ourselves' is mighty good reading and full of sound logic and wise conclusions. You outline a program that would save us from what seems to be the inevitable —but your program will not work. It could, but it won't. We are sporting in a high-power merry-go-'round in a fool's paradise, and no amount of logic and sound advice will save us from the ditch.

"I think we may reasonably assume that from history and experience we are taught that no great social readjustment or reorganization comes about except through dark trails of deep tribulation. We can be brought to a realizing sense of the fitness of things only when workmen go hungry and business men go broke. The workman wants more money and more hours to spend it in, more pay and less work, not that he may add to his store of useful knowledge and reasonable happiness, but that he may be able to practice a greater degree of indulgence; not that he may have a home of his own and accumulate for the years when he shall be reduced in efficiency or unable to earn at all, but that he may hope to play the game like those of another class are playing it. People who hold themselves of a higher grade socially and financially are a living example of unreasonable excess of expenditure and display. We are all paying more or less tribute to our vanity, many of us because we have not the courage to assert the strength of character that ought to be inherent in the best manhood.

"I do not mean to be pessimistic, merely resigned to the inevitable—inevitable according to the lessons of history and experience, the inevitable in accordance with the only sound conclusion that can be formed out of the present riot of unreasonableness. We will continue to have good times this year and probably next, possibly longer because of the irresistible demand upon human and material resources. The thoughtful man who has any gift for interpretation of the present situation as related to coming events will trim his sails and be at secure anchorage when the storm comes. Others must take the consequences, and all of us must suffer to a greater or less degree."



I stand corrected. I think he told the truth. But this does not mean that we who can see that we are in a high-power merry-go-'round in a fool's paradise and headed for the ditch should not do all we can to apply the brakes. Never in all our history did so great a responsibility rest upon the educated and the thoughtful as now. Never was there such compelling necessity that those who in any way influence the public should see clearly and talk straight. Never was there need of such sound instruction in our schools, from the primary up.

We need, first of all, to renew our faith in our institutions. If the things which led up to this war and the things which have followed it fail to give us renewed respect for the wisdom of the men who founded this government and gave us our constitution, then America is not worth saving and "government of the people, for the people, and by the people" is but a phrase for the cynics of future empires to mock at.

The war came upon the world through the abuse of autocratic power. That particular power is overthrown. Its chief exponent is in exile and may be banished, as the would-be autocrat of the world in the early part of the 19th century was banished, to die alone in the midst of the sea. Even so; the world today faces a greater and more destructive menace—the tyranny of the mob, the autocracy of a class, the reign of the demagogue. To avert this danger will require every ounce of moral courage and common sense left in the world. Personally, I do not at this time fear the man with a bomb in one hand and a torch in the other as much as I fear the dreamer, the sentimentalist and the ultra-altruist, the men and women who imagine that massed ignorance can, by some alchemy, be transformed into intelligence. There is just as much danger inherent in unbridled democracy as there is in autocracy—yea more.

We need to renew our faith in the integrity and the wisdom of our form of government. It will be conceded that no body of men was better fitted to lay the foundations of a great and free government than were those who worked out the constitution of the United States. They belonged to a race which had a passion for self-government. They dwelt in an environment which made them indifferent to precedent for the sake of precedent. Yet they knew the past and read well its lessons. Above all, they had time

to think. The constitution of the United States was not thrown together. It was carefully considered in its every part. As completed, it represented the composite wisdom of the most thoughtful group of men who ever formulated a body of fundamental law. No one should be rash enough to claim that these men made no mistakes, that the constitution as it came forth from their hands was a perfect instrument; but it has demonstrated its wisdom, here in America and elsewhere, to such an extent that no change in it should be undertaken, direct or indirectly, without the presumption that to change the constitution in any important particular *might* be a mistake. A study of this constitution ought to be one of the prerequisites of citizenship. In the course of its construction, every theory of government was advocated and discussed. There were in that convention men profoundly distrustful of the people; there were others who would have established a pure democracy. Fortunately for themselves and those who came after them, neither of these extremists had his way. The final result was a government in which the ultimate decision on all questions, even to the destruction of the constitution itself, rests with the people. But so carefully was the popular sovereignty safeguarded that only a well-considered verdict could be rendered and put into effect. A system of checks and balances was carefully worked out. That the executive might not exercise arbitrary power and the country be made dependent upon the wisdom of one man, it was decreed that his appointive and treaty-making power should be shared by the senate. The congress was made up of two branches, the membership of one responsible directly to the people and chosen every two years, the membership of the other chosen indirectly as representatives of the states and at less frequent intervals; and over all the supreme court of the United States, its judges removed, by virtue of the method of appointment and life tenure, from all temptation to serve partisan ends or court popular favor—they to pass upon the acts of Congress when challenged as to their constitutionality.

During the last decade, we have departed from these fundamental principles, in a few instances directly, but for the most part indirectly, to an extent greater than most people realize. There must be not only an end to this sort of thing, but a return to a purely representative government as distinguished from a democracy, or we shall substitute a government by the mob with a demogogue at the head, for a government of law administered by men who willingly and gladly conform to a constitution designed to permit a well ordered expression of the popular will without endangering the rights of the minority.



Our system of government has not failed. Under it the slave power was throttled and utterly destroyed. Under it, and in our own day, the sinister influences which sought to use the machinery of government for selfish ends and to exploit the public for the enrichment of the few, were put in leading-strings and in some instance in a straight jacket. Those of us who have had to do with public affairs in legislation, state and national, know how utterly impotent today is corporate power to influence legislation. The present-day menace is not the plutocrat. He has been dethroned as an influence in politics. The present day menace is the radical labor leader who would use the altogether natural, and until recently well-nigh universal, sympathy for labor, not to further the ends of justice, but to establish a tyranny of class and exploit the public for the alleged benefit of a minority. The American people, if honestly and fearlessly dealt with, will have no more tolerance for this sort of thing than for any other form of autocracy. The one chance possessed by the element that would Russianize America lies in this: The success of an effort systematically and persistently entered upon and pushed forward, to undermine the faith of the average American in the soundness of the underlying principles of our government and the integrity of our public men, especially our legislators and our judiciary. The triumph of this element would mean but one thing—a blind Sampson act on a scale never before perpetrated, the blasting of the "last best hope of earth." Beside a tragedy such as this, all other tragedies would be as nothing. For myself, I have no fear of the result if only the fight can be made in the open. For years we dallied with the slavery question, thinking we could exist half slave and half free. At last there came a man so honest, so candid and so brave that he stood up and proclaimed: "This thing cannot go on. A house divided against itself cannot stand. This country cannot exist half slave and half free." And then there came a time when the standard of value became a football in politics. For twenty-three years politicians forced statesmen to compromise that matter; but there came a time when a continuation of the last compromise meant ruin, and the issue of the standard of value had to be squarely met. It was met. The national honor triumphed and triumphed gloriously. After that came an attempt to do away with competition and establish monopoly: That effort threw some people into hysterics; but we met that issue, and today stock in the institutions we used to fear most is a liability rather than an asset.

What we need now is a sharply defined issue between Americanism and socialism. For myself, I hope it will come in the next presidential campaign. There need be no fear of the result. The

average American is not a radical. The great mass of American laboring men are not in favor of Soviet government. Neither are they in favor of a communistic state. A cabinet officer declared the other day that we had "reacted into an apparent orgy of class selfishness varied by mob violence." He had abundant foundation for such a statement, but in the last analysis no selfish autocratic purpose can succeed in this country.

Let us hope that this state of affairs is only a temporary thing—the mere aftermath of a hideous war. Let us hope that not in our day, nor in any day, shall class hatred or even class consciousness develop. Back in 1905, President Roosevelt, in a message to Congress, declared:

**"The vital lines of cleavage among our people do not correspond and indeed run at right angles to the lines of cleavage which divide occupation from occupation, which divide wage earners from capitalists, farmers from bankers, men of small means from men of large means, men who live in the towns from men who live in the country; for the vital line of cleavage is the line which divides the honest man who tries to do well by his neighbor from the dishonest man who does ill by his neighbor.**

**"It is the man's moral quality, his attitude toward the great questions which concern all humanity, his cleanliness of life, his power to do his duty toward himself and toward others which really count; and if we substitute for the standard of personal judgment which treats each man according to his merits another standard in accordance with which men of one class are favored and all men of another class discriminated against we shall do irreparable damage to the body politic.**

**'I believe our people are too sane, too self-respecting, too fit for self-government ever to adopt such an attitude. This government is not and never shall be government by a plutocracy. This government is not and never shall be government by a mob."**

Let us hope that forever and forevermore these words shall be truly descriptive of our attitude and our destiny.

It is the duty of every man and woman who loves freedom and hates anarchy to exert every ounce of his or her influence to bring about a return to sound thinking and sane action. It is difficult to have patience with those who indulge in wholesale denuciation of our government and with those who go about seeking to make men and women believe that the door of opportunity is closed to all but a few and that injustice is the habitual portion and poverty the common lot in America. By far the greater part of what we teach, preach and asseverate is not true. In theory and in fact, our government is the best in the world. It is the golden mien between autocracy and unbridled democracy. Like any other human agency, it has its defects. The evils of which we may reasonably complain, however, are for the most part, due to mal-administration rather than to any fundamental fault in the system. Under our constitution as interpreted by the courts, the bounds of freedom constantly widen. There never was a time when so much thought was given to the welfare of the so-called common man as now, especially here in the United States. Never before has there been a tithe of the effort put forth to assist the weak and lift up the fallen that is put forth now and here. Money flows into education from both public and private sources in an ever increasing volume. Public health agencies, whose aim is not only to help the afflicted, but to halt disease at its source, multiply. But that is not all. Fine as it is to help the weak and rescue the perishing, it is fundamentally better still to maintain a situation in which the door of opportunity is never closed. It has never been closed in this country. It never stood so invitingly open as now. Never before has it been so easy to gain an education, to enter upon a career or to acquire property as now, if only the will to do is present. A wish expressed with a yawn never became a reality and never can become a reality; but to him who will work and save and build all things are possible. The sole difficulty today is that so many people do not want to pay the price. They want some royal road alike to learning and to affluence; and the worst of it is they have been too often encouraged in the belief that their desires in this are legitimate and praiseworthy and that some way should be found to gratify them. The thing most to be feared is that flabbiness which comes with too much luxury, too much paternalism, too much dependence upon some agency other than our own individual effort. Do you not often wonder what is going to put iron into the blood of the rising generation? The young men and young women of Iowa who come into these state-supported institutions of learning with all their wealth of equipment and comfort, have no more conception of the common heritage which is theirs than the spoiled son of a successful business man who inherits his father's money has of what sacrifice and effort it cost that parent to lay the foundation of that fortune. The log-cabin, the rough floor, the utter absence of everything we now take as a matter of course in even the humblest homes, is not a memory nor even a tradition with them. They take what is bequeathed to them in common as their right, and often complain that their paths are not more thickly strewn with flowers. Speaking by-and-large, there is in this country today no such thing as a struggle for existence. It is a struggle for luxury.

I think we may again be called upon to suffer that we may be strong. It seems to be the way of the world. "For it must needs be that offences come, but woe unto that man by whom the

offence cometh." And if it be not sacrilege to place a footnote referring to such a majestic declaration of eternal truth, it might be added: "And woe, likewise, unto those by whom the offence did not come if they happen to live where and when the retribution for offences falls." Perhaps our greatest offence is our materialism. There are not a few anomalies in the present situation. Contemporaneous with the greatest expansion in education the world ever saw, fewer and fewer people seem to possess resources for happiness within themselves, and constantly seek to be amused by some external agency. The desire for luxury is well-nigh universal. Mindful of the fact that, within reasonable limitations, it is proper to seek amusement and comfort and even luxury, still must it be remembered that he who makes these things the primary objects of his life cannot find peace and true happiness. The things we imagine will satisfy us only stimulate some new desire, which, in turn, begets another. The old commandment stands: "Man cannot live by bread alone." I trust that through the making of a clear-cut issue between the sound principles upon which this government was founded and the idealistic vagaries of those who in all their calculations omit the ever-present human element, there may come about a new birth of freedom without a cataclysm; and that during the time this political battle is raging we may witness a rebirth of those principles that have always made for the best manhood—self-reliance, individual accountability and responsibility. There has been altogether too much of a tendency of late years to absolve the individual and to blame any sort of failure to some defect in the state or in society. That way lies destruction of everything that is admirable in human character. No one is worthy to be called heroic who cannot face adversity without an excuse or a whine, who cannot stand up whate'er befall and say:

> "It matters not how straight the gate,
> How charged with punishments the scroll,
> I am the master of my fate,
> I am the captain of my soul."



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